

**United States Agency for International Development
Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance**

Office of Food for Peace

**Fiscal Year 2013
Annual Results Reports (ARR)**

**Mercy Corps DRC
Award Number: FFP-A-11-00008**

Submission Date: November 4, 2013

Awardee HQ Contact Name:	Katherine Daniels
Awardee HQ Contact Address:	45 SW Ankeny Street Portland, OR 97204 USA
Awardee HQ Contact Tel.:	1 503 896 5802
Awardee HQ Contact Fax:	1 503 986 5011
Awardee HQ Contact e-mail:	kdaniels@mercycorps.org

Host Country Office Contact Name:	Mark Dwyer
Host Country Office Address:	Avenue Nyembo, Quartier Socimat, No. 12 Bis Gombe, Kinshasa, DR Congo
Host Country Office Contact Tel.	+ 243 997530476
Host Country Office Contact Fax:	n/a
Host Country Office Contact Email:	mdwyer@cd.mercycorps.org

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BCC	Behavior Change Communication
BXW	Banana Xanthomonas Wilt
CARG	Rural Agricultural Management Advisory Group
CCP	Provincial Consultative Council
CDP	Community Development Plan
CEDERU	Centre du Développement Rurale/Rural Development Center
CBSD	Cassava Brown Streak Disease
CSBV	Cassava Brown Striate Virus
CMD	Cassava Mosaic Disease
CPN	Consultation pre-natale (Pre-natal consultations)
CSB	Corn-Soy Blend
CTS	Commodities Tracking System
DNH	Do No Harm
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ENA	Essential Nutrition Actions
FERA	Food and Environment Research Agency
FFP	Office of Food for Peace
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FFW	Food for Work
FOD	Fédération des Organisations de Développement
FOG	Fixed Obligation Grant
HKI	Helen Keller INternational
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMCI	Integrated Management of Childhood Illness
INERA	National Institute for Agronomical Research
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPAPEL	Provincial Livestock Authority
LDC	Local Development Committee
LO	Livestock Organization
LOA	Life of Award
LQAS	Lot-Quality Assurance Sampling
LVA	Livestock Village Agent
PO	Producer Organization
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MONUSCO	Mission of the United Nations for the Stabilization of the Congo
MUAC	Mid-Upper Arm Circumference
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PM2A	Preventing Nutrition in Under 2 Approach
PNCPS	National Communication Program for Health Promotion
RECO	Relais Communautaire (community health volunteer)
SBC	Social and Behavioral Change
SENASEM	National Seeds Authority
SILC	Savings and Internal Lending Communities
SP	Seed Producer
TA	Technical Advisors for Agriculture
VA	Village Agents
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Associations

Table of Contents

Overview	4
Insecurity.....	4
Geographic Shift	4
Monetization	4
Commodities management.....	5
Coordination	5
Program Activities	5
SO1.	5
Crop disease management	5
Improved plant varieties	6
Agroforestry	7
Technical capacity-building	7
Seed certification	8
VSLA.....	8
Livestock	8
Micro-projects	8
Value chain analysis	9
Strategy changes	9
Partnerships and coordination	10
SO2.	10
Training and SBC	10
Household nutrition	11
PM2A	11
Behavior Change Communication	11
SO3	12
Community Development Plans.....	12
CARGs	13
Food for Work	13
Conflict mitigation.....	13
B. Success Stories	13
C. Lessons Learned.....	14

A. Introduction: Annual Food Assistance Program Results

Overview

Mercy Corps, in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS), is implementing the five-year RISE program aimed at ensuring that vulnerable households and communities in North Kivu build and sustain food security. The program focuses on improving agricultural production, controlling and eradicating crop disease, increasing household incomes, and preventing childhood malnutrition. Activities specifically address the challenges that vulnerable households face regarding food availability, access, and utilization. RISE aims to build communities' resilience to shocks by introducing and encouraging adoption of sustainable household coping mechanisms, while being able to engage more on market-related activities. The program includes a substantial focus on good governance to ensure that the results achieved are sustainable. This report presents the realizations, challenges and constraints of the second year implementation of the project.

Insecurity

The developing insecurity in Rutshuru has deeply affected the implementation of RISE during the reporting period. In June 2012, the M23 rebel movement took control of a substantial part of the Rutshuru area, culminating in their occupation of Goma in November 2012. While the M23 withdrew in December to allow for peace talks with the Congolese government, the area has since seen sporadic fighting and insecurity, leading to the temporary suspension of activities on multiple occasions.

Geographic Shift

The increased insecurity led the RISE consortium to request a change in geographic scope in order to deliver high impact. The geographical shift includes no changes in activities or number of beneficiaries. It involves the scaling down of activities in Rutshuru, scaling up activities in the Birambizo health zone (already part of the original area of intervention) and the expansion to Butembo, which is relatively more stable. Both Birambizo and Butembo are outside the influence of the M23. In Butembo, security and preliminary programmatic assessments were conducted in IY2.

With regard to PM2A, while RISE expected to reach the targeted number of beneficiaries in the past year, the security-related withdrawal from Binza health zone, where approximately 50% of the commodities were to be distributed, meant that the program had to reorganize in order to concentrate all PM2A activities in Birambizo. The previous sites had to be closed, staff transferred, and all activities shifted to Birambizo. This also led to a substantial quantity of CSB planned for distribution in IY2 being carried over to IY3. Despite reaching over 80% of the planned number of beneficiaries, only 47% of food planned for distribution in IY2 was distributed. Also, due to prevailing insecurity in Binza and demand for taxes by rebels, truck drivers could not deliver commodities via the usual routes. They instead took circuitous roads, thus delaying delivery of commodities to the field and reducing the number of distributions.

Monetization

Mercy Corps, in consortium with Food for the Hungry and ADRA sold 9,680MT of hard red winter wheat for a price of \$288 per ton, for a total amount of \$2,787,840 (55% cost recovery). This low cost recovery increases the risk to overall LOA results due to a budget shortfall.

Commodities management

RISE experienced a fairly complex year in terms of commodities. In May 2012, a previous loan of commodities to WFP in IY1 was reimbursed, consisting of 507MT of cornmeal, 158MT of yellow split peas, and 35MT of vegetable oil. RISE then gave 342MT of CSB, 96MT cornmeal, and 30MT of vegetable oil to CRS and Norwegian Refugee Council as part of an emergency response after the attack of Goma in November 2012. These commodities were reimbursed by FFP, received in-country in June 2013.

Another loan of 100MT of CSB was given to WFP in January 2013, which was reimbursed a few months later. In November 2012, IY2 commodities were received in DRC. However, RISE incurred a substantial marine and inland loss of 1.125MT of cornmeal and 25.375 MT of CSB. As the IY3 PREP was still in the process of being approved, an initial call forward was done for IY3 consisting of approximately 4 months out of 12 months' commodities. In June 2013, RISE requested an increase in FFW commodities of 480MT for IY3, which was approved.

Mercy Corps' warehouse construction was completed during the reporting period. However, the commodities for IY2 were still stored in WFP's warehouses, as they arrived before the setup was completed. The computerized Commodities Tracking System (CTS) has been operational from early IY2. Secondary transporters are showing reluctance to transport goods to remote and difficult-to-access locations. To respond to this, Mercy Corps purchased a 6X6 15MT truck to facilitate access to these difficult locations.

Coordination

Coordination meetings between the partners have taken place approximately every two weeks to coordinate between all program components. Two 2-day all-staff RISE meeting were organized during the year to strengthen the understanding of the integrated approach as well as to develop an exit strategy, partner monitoring strategy, develop expertise on Do No harm, and to enhance harmonization between program components. One Advisory Board meeting was held during the reporting period which included the Country Directors of CRS and Mercy Corps, the CRS MYAP Coordinator, and the RISE CoP. This meeting will become quarterly and allows the senior management of the two organizations to provide direction and guidance on the main issues of the program. Mercy Corps has also set up an internal Complex Program Management Board, which meets (through conference call) every five to six weeks. The goal is to share information, review major issues, and provide guidance to RISE from HQ senior management and technical staff.

Program Activities

SO1: By the end of the program, smallholder farming households in target areas increase and diversify production and profit.

Crop disease management

Under SO1, CRS implements activities targeting environmentally-friendly conservation agriculture and pandemic crop disease management for three major crops: banana, cassava and maize. This includes disseminating new technologies and strengthening farmer groups through extension services, farmer field schools (FFS), and demonstration and multiplication plots for banana, cassava and maize. CRS is implementing new methods to manage Banana Xanthomonas Wilt (BXW), Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD) and the newly identified Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD). CRS works through two local partners (Caritas Goma and CEDERU) as well

as the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) both at the provincial and local levels, using national and international research systems as a technical backstop.

CRS established 19 hectares of tertiary multiplication plots for cassava during IY2. This yielded 435,757 linear meters of disease-resistant cassava cuttings which were distributed to 8,715 beneficiary households. These fields were also used for trainings on improved cassava techniques as well as avoiding and control the spread of CMD. Individuals who participated in these trainings were targeted RISE beneficiaries, other producers not originally targeted but who were curious about improved techniques, and government agriculture and environment agents.

A sample of 6,000 cassava leaves was taken from plants in 20 secondary multiplication fields, which hosted the *Sawa Sawa*, *Mayombe*, *Sukisa*, *Nabana*, *Nsasi*, and *Disanga* varieties, selected by the project because of their resistance to CMD. This sample was sent to the UK-based Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) for testing for Cassava Brown Striate Virus (CSBV). Test results proved that the six cassava varieties encouraged by RISE are resistant to both CMD as well as the CSBV.

Activities related to prevention and control of BXW continued throughout IY2 in conjunction with installation of healthy banana trees throughout the project area. 4,479 banana producers were trained on the BXW cycle and methods for disease prevention and management through a learning series in 36 FFS. Through FFS, 20 previously-infected hectares of bananas were made healthy, and RISE planted an additional five hectares with new disease-free suckers. Eighty-three banana macropropagation sites (15 community-sized and 68 household-sized) were established with healthy suckers from the research center Inera Mulungu to train banana producers in production and management of healthy suckers to establish fields free of BXW. BXW-specific sensitization and tools were introduced throughout the year to inform producers and other community stakeholders on the disease cycle so that the pandemic can be avoided.

Improved plant varieties

CRS started activities with improved maize varieties during IY2. Eight hectares of secondary multiplication plots plus 31 hectares of tertiary installation plots installed by implementing partners and beneficiary producer groups yielded 6,088 kg of seeds, which were distributed to 1217 households.

Mercy Corps primarily implemented activities in Rutshuru area, but due to growing insecurity and limited access, started relocating to Birambizo area from March 2013 onward. Activities implemented in Rutshuru at the beginning of the year included the setup of five model farms at the start of Season A 2013 (August 2012-January 2013) in Mutaho, Kibumba (Karisimbi Health Zone), Rugari, Rwanguba, and Kibutu (Rutshuru Health Zone). Multiplication fields of six varieties of bio-fortified beans as well as one local variety, vegetable nurseries and demonstration plots¹ were planted to train beneficiaries at the model farms. Additionally, test fields of potatoes were installed in three sites (Kibumba, Rugari, and Rwanguba) to test these varieties and check whether biological pesticides can fully replace the use of chemical pesticides. Unfortunately, the fields in Kibumba were destroyed when fighting between the FARDC and M23 occurred at the end of 2012. In Rwanguba, potatoes were harvested before reaching their maturity by soldiers, rebels or beneficiaries themselves. In Rugari, Mercy Corps was unable to

¹ Plots included maranth, cabbage, carrot, celery, local and improved eggplant, leek, red and white onion, salad, and spinach.

collect sufficiently reliable data, as we were not present at harvest due to insecurity. However, three varieties seemed well adapted and gave good harvests in Rugari and Rwanguba with the use of best agricultural practices and botanical pesticides only. Mercy Corps had started repurchasing potatoes for the following season in Rutshuru, but we will not continue with them in Birambizo, where they are unsuitable to the terrain.

For Season B 2013 (February-July 2013), Mercy Corps set up another 4 model farms in Munigi, Rugari, Rwanguba, and Kibututu. Five bean varieties selected from the previous season were repurchased and planted, and two new ones were bought from providers in Uganda to be tested during the season. 6 varieties of Irish potatoes were also planted in Kibumba directly by Producer Organizations (POs) and Seeds Producers (SPs) to initiate beneficiary training and seed multiplication. Orange-fleshed sweet potato cuttings were introduced in 5 sites (Kibumba, Rugari, Kisigari, Ruwanguba and Kibututu) to be tested and multiplied.

Agroforestry

Four agroforestry nurseries were set up in Rugari, Ruwanguba, Biruma (Kisigari) and Kibututu in June 2012. Nine tree species were chosen to cover various beneficiaries' needs: production of wood for construction, cooking, fencing, enrichment of the soil in nitrogen, production of biomass for composting, animal feeding, or production of biological pesticides. 19,616 plantlets were distributed to 181 beneficiaries and associations in November-December 2012.

In Birambizo, Mercy Corps is working directly with Fédération des Organisations de Développement (FOD), an association well established in agro-forestry that has several nurseries in the Birambizo area. The program ordered 9,100 plantlets of 3 tree species (7,600 plantlets) and 5 fruit varieties (1,500 plantlets) to be delivered in October 2013. Those will be distributed to both agriculture and nutrition beneficiaries in collaboration with CRS.

Technical capacity-building

Following the selection of 13 associations and restructuring of their members into POs in IY1, RISE trained 49 Technical Advisors (TAs) and 41 Seed Producers (SPs) from 34 Producer Organizations in bean and vegetable best practices during Season A 2013 (August 2013-January 2014) on model farms in Mutaho, Kibumba (Karisimbi Health Zone), Rugari, Kisigari, Rwanguba, and Kibututu (Rutshuru Health Zone). The TAs then trained the members of their own POs using a cascade model. The program was not able to finish training these beneficiaries due to the suspension of activities between mid-November 2012 and mid-January 2013 due to insecurity. A 6-day training course was organized in collaboration with INERA for 40 beneficiaries in April in Goma, to ensure that those most active from each site received the full training and were capable of training the members of their POs. The program also distributed 4,151 kg of bean seeds to 556 trained beneficiaries. During Season B 2013 (February-July 2013) RISE phased out of Rutshuru area and trained only beneficiaries from 6 POs from Muja/Mutaho close to Goma and from Kibututu, via the consortium's partner association CEDERU.

Activities in Birambizo began in March 2013. As the agricultural season had already started, Mercy Corps was not able to set up model farms in time for that season. RISE trained beneficiaries directly in fields made available by POs. Four model farms have now been set up for Season A 2014 (August 2013-January 2014) in Kibirizi, Kashalira, Kikuku and Bwalanda with 5 varieties of bio-fortified beans and 14 types of vegetables (2 varieties of amaranth, cabbage, carrot, celery, local and improved eggplant, leek, red and white onion, garlic, tomato, salad, and spinach). RISE also planted half a hectare of orange-fleshed sweet potato in Kashalira.

These are being multiplied before distribution toward the end of the year. RISE nutrition beneficiaries were trained to promote the uptake of the crop and help respond to vitamin A deficiencies. In total, 367kg of bean seeds were distributed at model farms and PO fields.

Seed certification

In IY1, Mercy Corps signed a MOU with the National Seeds Authority (SENASEM) to visit SPs' fields prior to seed certification. For Season A 2013, 41 SPs from Rutshuru area seeded 531 kg of 5 varieties of pre-base bio-fortified and 1 variety of local beans. After 3 visits at field preparation, flowering, then harvesting time, SENASEM certified 18 producers from 5 sites (Mutaho, Rugari, Kisigari, Rwanguba, and Kibututu) for the production of 2,111 kg of seeds (117 kg each in average). At the start of Season B 2013, RISE provided 263 kg of bean seeds to 11 Seeds Producers from Muja/Mutaho and Kibututu. SENASEM was only able to conduct the initial field visit, due to insecurity. Therefore, no producers were certified at the end of the season. In Birambizo, SENASEM validated the fields of 22 bean SPs and 26 vegetable SPs for Season A 2014 (August 2013-January 2014).

VSLA

Other results include the training of 10 VSLA Village Agents (VA) from 7 villages who trained around 6 VSLA groups each. A total of 60 VSLA groups were formed and are meeting on a regular basis. On average, each member saved \$56 and those that took loans took an average of \$36. The majority of members being satisfied with the experience, 4 groups already started their second cycle. In addition, RISE trained 10 Livestock Village Agents (LVA) from 6 villages

Other activities include the selection of 73 Community Local Evaluators in both Rutshuru and Birambizo areas who were trained in both best agricultural practices and to conduct evaluation of their adoption. 683 beneficiaries adopted improved crop varieties (essentially beans) over the last two seasons. 98% of beneficiaries put at least 3 different techniques in practice in their own fields, ranging from crop association and maintenance to pests and disease identification, composting or minimum tillage. The results of those evaluations will be fed back to beneficiaries in Birambizo and taken into account to improve practical training of TAs and POs, better target beneficiary needs and interests, provide further support for practices implementation and increase uptake and impact amongst beneficiary populations.

Livestock

Livestock activities are well under way in Birambizo area since mid-IY2, and RISE expects to reach targeted beneficiary numbers in IY3. Three sites in Birambizo (Bwalanda, Kashalira and Kikuku) were selected to launch small livestock activities, and 3 Livestock Organizations (LOs) comprised of 59 mother leaders were trained in raising guinea pigs and rabbits at the household level to improve protein consumption. Two rabbit breeding units, aiming at multiplying animals while offering practical training, were constructed in Bwalanda and Kashalira, and one mixed rabbit and guinea pig breeding unit in Kikuku was constructed on land made available by local leaders.

Micro-projects

Sensitization was conducted repeatedly, initially in Rutshuru then Birambizo areas prior to launching calls for innovative micro-projects. The six projects selected will receive a grant of approximately \$1000 spread over nine to twelve months and be followed using the Fixed Obligation Grant (FOG) methodology. This activity aims to encourage producers to propose

their own innovative solutions to the problems they face and strengthen their production and/or increase their competitiveness, thus ensuring better access to local and regional markets. While the initiative was stopped in Rutshuru area following the geographical shift, six micro-projects were selected in Birambizo. These micro-projects aim to scale up entrepreneurship. The projects focus on bee keeping, honey production and commercialization, production and processing of a blend of maize, sorghum and soya for human consumption (which can replace the CSB distributed under SO2), fish breeding and selling, and large-scale vegetable production and selling at the local market.

Value chain analysis

In IY2, Mercy Corps started conducting a series of value chain analyses in Rutshuru, Rwanguba and Karisimbi Health Zones. At the end of 2012, this area was deemed too unstable to undertake marketing and commercialization activities with producers. Therefore, a value chain assessment of cassava, bananas, and beans was carried out in early IY3 in Butembo. This change had repercussions on other activities, such as the creation and training of women and youth and processing organizations in value-adding technologies and entrepreneurship. Such activities have been rescheduled for IY3 in Butembo and Birambizo.

Strategy changes

Due to increased insecurity in Rutshuru area and the proposed geographical shift, Mercy Corps reduced significantly its presence in the area from March 2013 onwards. Having limited access to Rutshuru, Mercy Corps was no longer able to properly follow activities at the sites. Follow up was, however, conducted at the model farms on an ad hoc basis by designated facilitators from partner associations until the end of the season. Delays occurred in training, both in good farming and harvest and post-harvest practices, as the increased insecurity and geographical shift occurred in the middle of the agricultural season.

This geographical shift was felt less by CRS, who had already focused part of its activities in Birambizo area. In regards to multiplication of maize, cassava and farmer field school implementation, targets were largely exceeded. Cassava and maize varieties were appropriately chosen, which was reflected in a high adoption rate in intervention communities. While SILC activities were planned to begin in August, the overlap with the beginning of a new agricultural season (when farmers were planting their crops) meant that this activity could not start as planned. These activities have been shifted to October and November 2013.

Notwithstanding the geographical shift, there are no other major changes in the strategy. The same activities and same approaches will be used in the new areas, with the exception of livestock activities. The risk of looting of goat-breeding units was judged too high to launch the activity in Birambizo area. Small livestock such as rabbits and guinea pigs are less risky for looting, and the LOs will ensure adequate security measures are in place at the units.

Following discussions and requests from beneficiaries, commodities will be distributed based on the number of best agricultural practices adopted during two consecutive seasons instead of three. Instead, kits will be distributed to vegetable producers to support their increased vegetable production and diversification. BCC campaigns will also support best practice uptake in the intervention area.

Partnerships and coordination

CRS works primarily with two local actors: Caritas Goma and CEDERU Kibututu. These two NGOs are active and highly integrated into beneficiary communities. These actors implement activities jointly with small producer organizations, which are identified locally. Mercy Corps collaborates with 23 selected local associations with regards to agriculture beneficiary identification and model farm maintenance via FFW.

At the provincial level, RISE has developed a strong relationship with the Rutshuru Agriculture Inspector, SENASEM (National Seeds Service), INERA, the Provincial Agriculture Ministry and the Ministry of the Environment. Contacts have also been established with the provincial livestock authorities (IPAPEL), and discussions are underway on how to support animal health services in Birambizo area. For BXW disease management and control, CRS partners with other national and international organizations, including FAO, FERA, IITA, CILCA, among others. Local chiefs, leaders, churches and communities are implicated in program implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation activities, particularly with the newly developed Community Development Plans (under SO3) confirming the implication and oversight of communities and local authorities

SO2: By the end of the program, the rate of chronic malnutrition is reduced in children under 5 in target areas.

After the withdrawal of HKI from RISE, CRS assumed responsibility for training health actors as trainers and in Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA), Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI), and reproductive health, with a focus on pre- and post-natal care. All trainings of trainers (TOTs) were completed in close collaboration with the Provincial Health Division, which assured that trainers and materials were in compliance with MoH standards. Complementary messaging at the community and household levels encouraged families to use health structures for pre- and post-natal care and sick child visits. Material in the form of pre- and post-natal health forms and growth monitoring sheets were identified as lacking in targeted health centers by the IY1 capacity assessment. These were replicated and distributed during IY2 to reinforce quality and record-keeping of health services.

Training and SBC

Training and Social Behavior Change (SBC) strategies are integrated throughout activities, particularly related to the three key themes of IMCI, ENA, and hygiene. Health services were supported with necessary equipment, such as scales and mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) measuring tapes. Staff and *Relais Communautaires*² (RECOs) have been trained on their proper use. Health center staff assisted RISE in identifying RECOs active in maternal and child health and nutrition and participated in training RECOs in the three key themes. RECOs training will be separate from that provided to the health center staff, as it will be on a different technical level and done in the local language. RECOs were also trained on how to conduct home visits to monitor mothers, caregivers and children, as well as how to make detections and referrals of cases to health structures for acute malnutrition and in response to other warning signs of childhood illness. BCC and negotiation techniques are included in this training. RECOs also receive kits to allow them to carry out sensitization and education activities at a household level.

² Community health volunteers

Household nutrition

RISE uses a behavior change approach to target specific health and nutrition practices based on formative research and behavior change messaging developed by HKI. This research identified barriers to adoption of promoted behaviors, such as immediate and exclusive breastfeeding. During IY2, CRS translated the key messages into local languages, developed image booklets, and developed and registered radio spots for diffusion throughout the project zone.

PM2A

PM2A was scaled up in the Birambizo Health Zone from four to fourteen health areas in IY2. This rapid scale-up was possible with the relocation of staff from Rutshuru. The newly-added health areas are rural, secure, accessible by vehicle, and allow for complementary activities with other RISE components. Mother-child pairs are targeted to receive individual monthly rations of CSB and oil for the woman throughout pregnancy and for the first six months of the child's life. The ration then switches to the child from six to 24 months of age. RISE encourages exclusive breastfeeding until six months of age and incentivizes correct complementary feeding from six months on with rations. In July 2012, 800 women began receiving rations; this grew to 11,737 women and 1,816 children over six months by August 2013. All PM2A participants are provided "health passports" which are combined ration cards with space for monitoring prenatal health, child growth, and other key community-based RISE activities.

PM2A targets were lower than projected given the continuing insecurity in the target zone, but the situation was not as critical as it could have been, given the fact that the population estimates from which the project was making projections were lower than reality. There are more women of reproductive age in the targeted health zones, there was limited population movement into the Birambizo Health Zone, and the women targeted are all residents of the target communities, not camps, increasing the likelihood of their continued participation throughout the entire PM2A cycle.

Trainings were also affected by other factors. For example, RISE planned to train 800 RECOs in ENA, but only trained 244 because community health workers do not exist in sufficient numbers in the targeted health areas. For this same reason, SO2 achieved only 23% of the target for RECO referral of cases of acute malnutrition and childhood illness to health centers. Only 15 out of the targeted 29 health centers received growth monitoring and pre- and post-natal care supports, as those targets were set prior to the geographic shift. RISE is currently operational in 20 health centers across 14 health areas, in addition to the main office of Birambizo Health Zone. Scale-up into Butembo will allow RISE to reach the targeted number of supported health centers by the end of IY3. Activities with Mother Leaders are progressing well, despite the presence of RISE in a smaller geographic area. Targeted communities have identified 235 Mother Leaders who have been trained in ENA and breastfeeding counseling and who are active with cooking demonstrations and house visits for PM2A beneficiaries.

Behavior Change Communication

From the start of IY1 and throughout IY2, BCC activities have mainly focused on health and nutrition, including ENA and other behaviors identified in PM2A technical documents, but as BCC activities move forward, RISE seeks to incorporate behavior change strategies into all aspects of RISE as a means of achieving sustainability. There is a clear need to integrate ENA best practices into further campaigns. The consortium is devising innovative ways to promote ENA, as well as develop new messages according to how they are being understood and how

they succeed in changing our priority groups' perceptions and opinions. RISE is partnering with local radio stations and making efforts to partner with the Direction Préfectoral de Santé (DPS) to disseminate messages about health, nutrition, and other behaviors. In partnership with the Health Communications Office at the Provincial Health Division, RISE will ensure proper content of radio messaging while building the skills of local radio animators.

Aside for the population estimates, all other SO2 assumptions have held true. Health-seeking behavior has risen in the Health Zone, according to Government Health Officials. Women are increasingly accessing health care centers for pre-natal and post-natal care, as well as to monitor child growth. The number of cases of malnutrition has dropped, and knowledge of essential nutrition actions has improved. There is a greater awareness in the community of the importance of consuming diverse foods. In general, women have also expressed satisfaction with pre-natal care activities. The perception of mothers and the Birambizo Health Zone Management Team indicates that women had fewer issues during childbirth and that more children are being born at acceptable birth weights (above 2.5 kg), with the average rate of low birth weight in supported health centers decreasing from 2.7% at the start of the project to 2.1% at the end of IY2.

To promote sustainability, the project is collaborating closely with the Birambizo Health Zone Management Team around the linkages between prenatal visits (CPN) and PM2A registration and distribution. These same government colleagues have also been close collaborators on other technical themes, such as ENA, community-level screening, and IMCI. The Provincial Health Direction provided trainers and is in the process of planning joint supervisory visits with the project team. There has been a focus during IY2 to strengthen health services and provide quality care at all levels - from the health centers to home visits by RECOs. Increased sensitization around the importance of prenatal care, combined with improved services and materials at health centers are strong signs that prenatal care-seeking practices will continue after the project ends. Appreciation for locally available foods and increased understanding of their nutritional value contributes to a very high likelihood for sustainability of the third intermediate result under SO2.

SO3: By the end of the program, responsive government structures and participatory governance mechanisms in target areas reinforce community resilience to food insecurity

The RISE governance team experienced turnover and was fully operational only from mid-IY2. This resulted in reaching a lower than anticipated number of beneficiaries. Activities related to Disaster Risk Reduction Plans, Early Warning Systems, and land access will be rescheduled for the first quarter of IY3. In Rutshuru, given the increased insecurity, governance activities were minimal and limited only to organizational development of youth and women's associations.

Community Development Plans

In IY2, RISE reached 2,140 out of 12,000 targeted beneficiaries, mainly through capacity building on local governance, information sharing, and the elaboration of Community Development Plans (CDPs). In Birambizo, a total of 17 CDPs were developed by beneficiary communities. During this process, RISE supported communities to establish 17 Local Development Committees (LDCs) who took a lead role in driving the CDPs and advocating local priorities, including agriculture. These LDCs will monitor the implementation of the GoDRC's decentralization policy and development plans at the local level. They will help ensure sustainability of RISE's impact upon completion. The percentage of women's participation in all

governance activities stands at 38%, while RISE was expecting to achieve at least 50% participation. Increased efforts are being placed in integrating gender more consistently.

CARGs

A total of 104 local authorities were trained on elaboration of CDPs, as well as roles, responsibilities, organizational structures and management of the Conseils Agricoles Ruraux de Gestion (CARGs). A partnership is being discussed with the Ministry of Decentralization on governance activities and facilitating integration and local mobilization. RISE organized one provincial workshop with the MoA, a meeting of the Provincial Consultative Council (CCP), and two workshops of CARGs in Bwito. Despite the delay in starting with the CARGs, this activity is now on track. 48 CARG (18 more than planned) members in Bwito benefited from capacity building on agricultural laws and information sessions on the CARGs' role and vision. They are providing local services to farmers and serve as a space for dialogue between grassroots communities, local authorities, government representatives, and local actors. Alongside local authorities and CARGs, 91 local associations received trainings on organizational management and institutional development.

The advocacy campaign conducted by the provincial CARG and supported by the RISE program included an information-sharing workshop with INGOs and the MoA to encourage potential partners to support the CARGs as a mechanism for citizens' participation in development.

Food for Work

Before the CDPs were developed, FFW activities implemented in IY2 were discussed in an ad hoc manner with every community to identify their priorities. A total of 22 projects in 23 communities reaching 7,463 people were implemented, varying from road rehabilitation to agro-forestry as well as the construction of fishponds. While these were not yet formalized in the CDPs, they offered an way to engage community dialogue on priorities and thus prepared the ground for the CDPs.

FFW faced several challenges, including local leadership conflicts, attempts at political manipulation, delays in finalizing LDPs, quantities of food being seen as insufficient by communities, and difficulty in selecting partners. To overcome these challenges, particular attention was placed on implementing projects through CDP mechanism as well as partnering with local associations, authorities, and CARGs.

Conflict mitigation

RISE organized a training on "Do No Harm" principles to identify the effects of decisions on community relations and help us become more conflict-sensitive. RISE will conduct an assessment to evaluate the implementation of this approach. RISE also developed a partnership with UN-HABITAT to strengthen the capacity of CARGs, CSOs and local authorities on land conflict mediation and establish local mechanisms to resolve land disputes. This partnership is being developed, with this training planned for November 2013.

B. Success Stories

Despite initial reluctance from beneficiaries to VSLA, particularly men, communities in Rutshuru have now fully adopted the activity. New groups, including men, have requested to be trained by VSLA agents. Groups that finished their first cycle have initiated a new one, paying for their own materials (e.g. printing booklets for new members, obtaining cash boxes). The success of these groups led an increase in economic activities, such as selling vegetables and

flour to buy agricultural inputs, strengthening small livestock, etc. The VSLA social fund also reinforced cohesion within communities.

While development programming in North Kivu is not entirely new, RISE's introduction of a complex, integrated development model in North Kivu has sparked discussions among other international and local actors on the approach being used to provide assistance to vulnerable people in a chronic emergency environment. Multi-lateral discussions within the UN cluster system and among INGOs are starting to highlight the principle of "Do No Harm" for humanitarian actors undertaking emergency interventions in camps and throughout North Kivu. Humanitarian organizations and UN agencies are starting to question the long-term effects of humanitarian, early recovery, and development programs. While these conversations have not yet produced systemic change, it is becoming clear that discussions RISE's successes and challenges are reaching a larger audience, inspiring the INGO community in the region to carefully consider its approach.

C. Lessons Learned

One key lesson learned is the need to institutionalize program-wide accountability and establish a beneficiary feedback system. Such systems have existed informally since the beginning of the program, through community focus groups, post-distribution monitoring, and trainings on the norms of RISE interventions. To improve and formalize this system, an Accountability and Learning Coordinator is being recruited to work with communities to create transparent and well-defined mechanisms for voicing complaints and making suggestions. He/she will also develop an internal complaint system within the RISE team to triage viable complaints to the relevant parties (CoP, program managers, human resources, etc.). S/he will communicate responses to appropriate community members. Building an accountability mechanism is essential to opening lines of communication in order to promote inclusive, transparent programming and prevent corruption.

Another lesson learned on SO2 is that we need to ensure those receiving benefits in a certain health area are indeed residents of that area, to allow for compliance with serving only targeted beneficiaries. This will also increase the chance that the mother-child pair can be followed through the entire PM2A cycle. RISE staff will continue to work closely with local leaders and RECOs to achieve this. RECO involvement in PM2A has increased at the request of the Health Zone Management Team to provide an additional check on beneficiary validity.

Another issue is that beneficiaries are concerned that their other children 6-23 who were born before the woman entered the program are not receiving CSB and oil rations, whereas a child born after the mother has enrolled in the program is eligible for those rations. The program staff found that these mothers commonly share their CSB with their non-eligible children. Wholesale integration of the older children is not possible, since target beneficiaries are clearly defined under the PM2A approach. However, the SO2 team can collaborate with the SO1 team to help mothers grow maize and soy beans to produce their own CSB, which could be shared with other members of the family. Transformation efforts led by SO1 will allow for producer organizations and associations of women to provide this at the community level.

Going forward, all RISE activities (for all SOs) will be linked with the CDPs to encourage participatory development and ownership. All new activities, particularly in new areas (e.g. Butembo) must be linked to the CDP process to ensure their relevance.

With regards to M&E, RISE has made substantial progress on data collection and management. However, there is room to improve beneficiary monitoring data. First, the consolidation of beneficiary-level data into a cross-cutting RISE database would prevent double counting within SOs. A database of all RISE beneficiaries will allow for unique identifiers to be given to each household, which would decrease the burden of M&E staff to cross-check beneficiaries within SOs. RISE also intends to improve the use of regular monitoring data to inform management decisions. In doing so, RISE program managers will be able to adapt activities in specific areas in response to community feedback.